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A NEW APPROACH TO HISTORY

By A. A. GOLDENWEISER

IT may or it may not be accidental that the interest in social science has lately received a mighty impetus. Books and articles on social and political theory, on democracy, the individual and the group, the state, the crowd, come from the press in well-nigh endless succession. The time indeed seems eminently ripe to reconsider our ideas of society and their application to life, for history has run amuck, and unless man interferes before it is too late, we may yet have to face the task of rebuilding the whole of civilization from the bottom up. As it always happens in cases like this, the more practical and immediate demands of the hour reëcho in the more remote realms of scientific thought and speculation. Thus the relations of history and ethnology to other sciences, such as psychology and sociology, have recently been reconsidered by Lowie,¹ Hocart,² Wissler,³ and Rivers.⁴ Kroeber has turned his attention to the theoretical relation of the historic to the biological sciences.⁵ Going still further, the same writer published a somewhat cryptic, but none the less interesting, catechism of historic theory and methodology,⁶ which elicited a spirited reply from Haeberlin.⁷ Again, the danger of over-emphasizing the purely conventional barrier between the different social sciences was pointed out by the present writer, and this was made the point of

¹ "Psychology and Sociology," *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. XXI (1915), pp. 217-229.

² "Ethnology and Psychology," *Folklore*, vol. LXXV (1915), pp. 115-138.

³ "Psychological and Historical Interpretations for Culture," *Science*, vol. XLIII (1916), pp. 193-201.

⁴ "Sociology and Psychology," *The Sociological Review*, vol. IX (1916), pp. 1-13.

⁵ "The Superorganic," *American Anthropologist*, vol. XIX (1917), pp. 163-213. See also the discussions by Sapir (*ibid.*, pp. 441-447) and Goldenweiser (*ibid.*, pp. 447-449).

⁶ "The Eighteen Professions," *American Anthropologist*, vol. XIX (1917), pp. 283-289.

⁷ "Anti-professions," *American Anthropologist*, *ibid.*, pp. 756-759.

departure for a general theoretical analysis of the elements of history and culture.¹ To those interested in this once much cultivated but later somewhat neglected field, Professor Teggart's recent little volume² comes as a welcome contribution indeed. In more than one way the essay is timely and significant, while its contents will arouse in the mind of the student of culture (from an ethnological angle) frequent approval as well as equally emphatic disagreement. What the author purports to do—and of that larger endeavor the tiny volume before us is but a modest precursor—is to demonstrate “what sort of results might be obtained by a strict application of the method of science to the facts of history” (p. v). From another standpoint, the greater work will be “an attempt to do for history what biologists are engaged in doing for the history of the forms of life” (*ibid.*).

In the section on “The Nature and Scope of the Inquiry” we are informed that

Science is, fundamentally, a method of dealing with problems, and the initial step in any scientific undertaking is the determination of the problem to be investigated (p. 1).

The problem, then, in this humanistic inquiry is to ascertain “how man everywhere has come to be as he is” (p. 5). This formulation becomes the author's *Leitmotiv*, and thus we find it repeated many times in the course of the discussion (*e.g.*, on pp. 18, 25, 38, 90). Without much difficulty, in crisp and perfectly convincing statements, the author disposes of the physical, psychological, and climatic or environmental hypotheses, which have at various times

¹ “History, Psychology and Culture; Some Categories for an Introduction to Social Science,” *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, vol. xv (October 10 and 22, 1918). See discussions by: Charles A. Ellwood, *ibid.*, January 30, 1918; Frederick J. Teggart, *ibid.*, March 13, 1918; H. D. Sheldon, *ibid.*, July 5, 1918. A. L. Kroeber's article, “The Possibility of a Social Psychology,” *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. xxiii (1918), pp. 633–651; and H. K. Haeberlin's acute analysis of Wundt, “The Theoretical Foundations of Wundt's Volk-Psychology,” *The Psychological Review*, vol. xxiii (1916), pp. 279–302, should be consulted in this connection.

² *The Processes of History*. By Frederick J. Teggart, Yale University, New Haven (1918), pp. ix + 162. See the same author's “Prolegomena to History,” *University of California Publications in History*, vol. iv, no. 3 (Berkeley, 1916), and A. L. Kroeber's discussions (cited above.).

been advanced to account for the differences of the various types of man "as he has come to be."¹ The upshot of the author's critique is that

it has not seemed necessary to the exponents of these views to show how the factors described could have produced the differences which we see around us (p. 11).

In view of the tenacity with which the so-called economic interpretation of history still possesses the mind of man (as he has come to be), the author's censure on Marx's doctrine is particularly welcome; "He [Marx] neither considered the entire field of economic activity in modern life," writes Dr. Teggart, "nor the conditions of labor in any other than the capitalistic form of society;" and again: "this theory . . . is based upon a limited view of the facts, and represents the projection of a single factor upon the complexity of human experience" (pp. 16-17). Follows a brief discussion and critique of the concept of progress, which is as unusual as it is just, leading up to this categorical statement:

If we look a little further, it will be to discover that human history is not unitary, but pluralistic; that what we are given is not one history, but many; and, that the concept of 'progress' is arrived at by the maintenance of a Europocentric tradition and the elimination from consideration of the activities of all peoples whose civilization does not at once appear as contributory to our own (p. 24).

Rather than

to create narratives based upon the selection of events which seem to us of importance in view of some unverified theory of progress,

the author recommends that we

compare these several histories [of different peoples] with the object of ascertaining what it is they hold in common (p. 25).

From this point on to the end of the first chapter the discussion takes us right to the kernel of the author's conception. Human history is here put on a level with

other fields of history, such as astronomy, geology and biology (p. 26), [for] it comes to be seen that historical method is the same whatever the history investigated—whether that of the stellar universe, of the earth, of the forms of life upon the earth, or of man (p. 33).

¹ It must all along be remembered that "man" throughout this discussion often stands for "civilization," in its material as well as psychic manifestations.

Moreover, the student of human history has a marked advantage over the historian of nature in so far as the former's record is definitely (or relatively definitely) chronologized.

It seems time to pause here, as the formulations toward the end of the chapter contrast strongly with the professions in the opening pages and the preface. We were told that the method of science was to be applied to human history, but further reading shows that the "method of science" is to be the method of the historic branches of the natural sciences, astronomy, geology, biology; for it will be admitted that these sciences have also non-historical aspects, a statement to a degree applicable also to the sciences of society. Nor is this all. The terms "scientific" and "scientific method" have acquired some of their most current connotations from their association with the so-called exact sciences, such as physics, chemistry, mathematics, or that mathematical branch of astronomy known as celestial mechanics. Scientific method in most general terms has thus come to mean one of two things: either 1, problem-working-hypothesis-experimentation (under controlled conditions). Acceptance or rejection of hypothesis-theory (sometimes designated as "principle" or "law"); or 2, theoretical formulation of a scheme or system of magnitudes, forces and correlations which, when applied to the interpretation of a particular, more or less complex set of facts and relations, proves a means of simplification or at least of consistent statement (this latter method being used in such sciences as theoretical physics and in some branches of celestial mechanics). Now, while some advocates of eugenics have proposed and to a degree carried out experiments, somewhat after the nature of the first of the above methods, whereas the second has been weekly adumbrated in some of the hypothetical constructs of modern ethnological diffusionists, all in all, there is no room in social science for either of the two characteristic "methods of science." However that may be, these methods are obviously out of court when one deals with the historical aspects of society or with the historical branches of such natural sciences as astronomy, geology or biology. If one further inquires for the particular method of the natural-historical sciences which the author would attempt to

emulate in his study, it readily appears that what he essays is the *determination of constants*. In this endeavor he will have with him all those whose minds are wont to be perturbed by the contemplation of the immensely complicated and apparently disorderly successions of historic happenings. But here there arises one further query. Suppose such a constant, nay, a set of constants, were disclosed, thus greatly enhancing our insight into historical processes. Still, from what we know of history and of man (as he has come to be), it is but reasonable to expect that these constants would not prove a complete rationale of history, but of certain more or less prominent aspects of it. Now, in the facts and successions constituting the subject-matter of the natural-historical sciences there also are discernible certain constants as well as certain variants, but it so happens that the variants, in these cases, do not interest us, or interest us but slightly; fortunately so, for, as the author notes, we lack the means of reconstructing the minutiae of these processes and of chronologizing them. Not so in history. Without attempting to raise from well-deserved historical obscurity the proverbial death of a neighbor's cat, it is but fair to doubt whether the historic constants—when disclosed—will cover all that is theoretically interesting and humanly significant. To disregard such residual facts and successions would be to sacrifice reality to method, to accept them, on the other hand, would mean to assign to the results of the method a relatively modest place as heuristic tools in historic study.

We may now proceed to an examination of the author's constants. The second chapter on "The Geographical Factor in History" is devoted to a demonstration of what Professor Teggart calls "the homogeneity of history." The thesis in the author's own words is as follows:

The fundamental basis of argument for holding that the history of man everywhere is of the same fabric, does not rest upon the inter-connection of events, but may be stated in the form that the varying experiences of human groups have been similarly conditioned by the varying aspects of the conformation of the globe. Man cannot escape the physical world in which he lives, nor its infinite diversification; this is obvious, but it will require some illustration to make clear the fact that the even-handed dominance of nature leads inevitably to widely different results in the lives of men (pp. 44-5).

Now, this

close dependence of history upon the irregularities of the surface of the earth (p. 47) [is exemplified in] another aspect of homogeneity, which is, that the political organizations dealt with in history have all come into being at definite and restricted spots, from which, subsequently they have expanded (p. 48).

It will thus be seen that the inquiry is henceforth limited "to the beginnings of political organization" (p. 49). Furthermore,

this determinant influence of routes has been dependent upon the presence of human beings, . . . it comes into play only in case of the movement of peoples [migrations]. Hence the origin of these movements becomes a matter of primary importance, more particularly as the homogeneity of history is further exhibited in the dependence of these movements of migrations upon man's physical surroundings (pp. 52-3).

The environmental feature responsible for such migrations finally is shown to consist in destructive changes of climate (pp. 68-75). The cycle of constants thus brought to light may now be schematized as follows: pressure of deficient food supply brought about through destructive changes of climate; migration; friction with preëxisting populations at a geographically conditioned terminus of the route of travel taken by the migration; emergence of political organization. This successive series is again resolvable into two causal constants: 1, the relation of migration to certain adverse climatic conditions; and 2, the relation of political organization to migration plus certain specific geographical conditions.

In examining point (1)¹ it may be admitted from the outset

¹ Two subsidiary points in the author's argument must be met here. The first refers to the balance of population in primitive conditions which, according to the author, "in normal stable conditions remains stationary; . . . among primitive peoples there is no "national increase" which would lead inevitably to migrations" (p. 64). In this connection the prevalence and importance of infanticide is emphasized. Now, while it will be time enough to examine the author's evidence when it is produced, it may not be amiss to state right here that Professor Teggart's assertion that "infanticide, the killing of new-born infants, has been practised universally throughout the world (p. 58) is not supported by ethnological experience, within the knowledge of the reviewer. As to the alleged absence of the "natural increase" in primitive populations, it is worth notice that whereas in aboriginal Australia, the South Sea area, and the two Americas the density of population has for exceedingly long periods remained on a level incomparably below modern standards, the population of primitive Africa has increased to a degree which, barring the populations of modern cities, may well stand comparison with many areas in civilization. The author's second point refers to

that changes of climate destructive enough to make the discomforts of mass migration preferable to readjustment *in loco*, would be likely to result in such migration. That precisely such climatic cataclisms will result in the destruction and mass migration of animals, has often been hypothesized and described. Kropotkin has given us a very vivid picture of these phenomena in the opening chapters of his "Mutual Aid." After Pumpelly's expedition, to which Professor Teggart gives due credit, there remains no doubt that periods of desiccation in Turkestan were accompanied by migrations, evidently on a considerable scale. All this however is not sufficient to justify the designation of a "constant" in application to the causal link "climate-migration." For, does violent climatic change always cause migration and does migration follow from no other antecedents? I am unable to answer the first query without further consultation of relevant data, should such be in existence. As to the second, it must be answered in the negative in the face of those vast areas of human migrations to which reference was made above. That climatic changes should have been responsible, for instance, for the migrations of hordes of Athapascans from the interior of Canada along the Pacific coast and down to the Pueblos of the Southwest, of this there is, to my knowledge, no evidence whatsoever. The same applies to the Bantu migrations of the southeast of Africa. As to the migrations of the Papuans and Melanesians, what we know of their direction and extent discourages any climatological interpretation. Moreover, the

the unlikelihood of migration on anything like a large scale unless the people are actually "driven"; for we learn that "man is prone to remain where he is, to fixity in ideas and in ways of doing things, and only through nature's insistent driving has he been shaken out of his immobility and set wayfaring upon the open road" (p. 76). To this is joined the somewhat absurd assertion of Keane that "most African negroes south of the equator, most Oceanic negroes (Melanesians and Papuans), all Australian and American aborigines have remained in their original habitats ever since what may be called the first settlement of the earth by man [*sic* !]" (p. 64). Without disputing in the least the faith in human inertia reflected in the above general statement, and siding with the author in his rejection of the hypothesis that "man is primarily a migratory, restless being" (p. 76), one is but little impressed by specifications such as these in the face of the extant evidence for minor as well as major migrations provided by the linguistic map of North America, by traditional and much convergent semi-historical material from the entire southeast of Africa, and by traditional, somatological and general cultural data from the Papuan-Melanesian district.

latter district is flanked by two nuclei of migrations, the Malay and the Polynesian, which in extent and, in case of the latter, also in complexity, can scarcely be matched by any other migrations in human history. That primitive peoples, navigating what after all were crude and flimsy vessels, should have succeeded in linking by a continuous chain of migrations the shores of Easter island with those of Madagascar, must be pronounced as truly remarkable; and it seems obvious that changes of climate had nothing whatever to do with these movements. Also, if it is objected that the numbers involved at any given time were small, one may well reply that the means of transportation available precluded the simultaneous movement of larger numbers, that, in proportion to the probable density of populations among those peoples, the few were not so few, and, finally, that where the few moved the many might have moved also.

Before the causal link "migration-political organization" can be discussed, we must turn to the opening paragraph of the chapter on "The Human Factor in History," in which the author's conception of political organization receives more precise formulation. "Political organization is a comparatively recent phenomenon" . . . (p. 79) reads the first sentence. Again: "Political organization is an exceptional thing, characteristic only of certain groups" (*ibid.*). Now, strictly speaking, statements such as these must be declared wholly erroneous. For political organization, as an expression of the integrating tendency in society, as contrasted with the differentiating tendency finding expression in social organization (in the narrower sense), is as old as the latter, and, in a sense, as old as society itself. As far as the student's eye can reach, it seems, man recognized, unconsciously though it may have been, the sovereignty of the group, speaking a common language (or dialect), occupying a more or less definitely circumscribed territory, having within that territory certain privileges (denied to outsiders) and sharing together certain locally particularized customs and traditions. This sovereignty often expresses itself in the prestige and influence wielded by the tribal old men, or by a chief or chiefs. In later periods the territorial expanse, the numerical strength and

the functional integration of the tribe or tribal cluster, conspicuously increase. It is true that some of the functions inherent in the modern state, such as the more narrowly administrative ones, or, in recent times, economic ones, are but weakly represented in those primitive political aggregates, if indeed they are represented at all. This however, is a question of a different order; the political organization itself, being, it seems, a quasi-organic attribute of human groups (for is not man a *ξῶον πολιτικόν*?) is there nevertheless. It is, therefore, also erroneous to contrast, as does the author (following though he does authoritative precedent), "primitive" and "civilized" groups of men by stating that

among the former, the individual identifies himself by particularizing his blood relationship, whereas, in the latter, the individual defines his status in terms of relation to a given territory (p. 80).

The territorial organization of the state, with its manifold functions, does stand out as something in its entirety foreign to primitive society, but the contrast is mitigated when comparison is made not with the kinship grouping, representing a social principle on a different level, but with tribal political organization, finding expression in territory, language, custom, chieftainship, etc. The kinship organization of primitive society, on the other hand, together with its organization into families, occasionally overshadowed though the latter may be by the former, should properly be juxtaposed to the modern family organization. For do not family and clan (or gens) both represent a kinship grouping based on blood relationship, actual in the family, often assumed in the clan (or gens)? The family, moreover, recognizes simultaneously both lines of descent (paternal and maternal), whereas but one is considered in the clan (maternal) and gens (paternal). If comparison is made on this basis, it will, I think, be found, that the family is perhaps no less important in the modern territorial state than the clan (gens) and sometimes family are in the primitive political unit (tribe or tribal cluster); and in both instances, some of the traits and functions of these kinship groups are contingent upon their inclusion in the political unit,¹ while they also possess

¹ A possible objection might be raised to the preceding argument on the ground that the term "political organization" has in it been given a different connotation from

other traits, and functions inherent in their character of kin (or blood) groups.

If, then, it is accepted that political organization is inherent in society, migration evidently has nothing to do with it. In fairness to the author, however, let us glance for a moment at forms of political organization coming nearer to those with which he would specifically deal. The reference is to political systems of a higher degree of integration and centralization than is common in most primitive society. Such political systems occur in three wide geographical areas: parts of North America, a large part of Bantu and Sudanese Africa, and Polynesia. The political form which is indigenous in North America (although it occurs in a limited number of instances only) is the Confederacy, that of the Iroquois being best known. It involves, of course, a considerable degree of integration of the functions of the constituent tribes, but lacks the feature of supreme authority being lodged in one ruling head, the administrative authority and functions of the body of semi-elected, semi-hereditary chiefs also being distinctly limited. The African state approaches the Eurasian form much more closely, in so far as the territory occupied is often considerable, the individuals comprised in the state number hundreds of thousands or even millions, the centralization of administrative functions is marked, and the state is headed by a king, hereditary, of sacred person, owner of the state land, absolute master over the life and death of his subjects, and legislator. In Polynesia, the territorial and population proportions are again reduced to the more primitive level, but there is a king, whose person is sacred, whose prestige is tremendous, who, without being a legislator, wields the almost equivalent power of the imposition of *tabu*. Should one look about for

that adhered to by the author. It is true that Professor Teggart is at liberty to use terms with whatever meaning may to him seem appropriate, provided the use is consistent; but the issue here is not terminological, for when it is possible to show, as in the above excursion, that certain features of political organization in its modern sense (meaning the "State" of history) are shared by human aggregates down to remotest antiquity, the "emergence of political organization" (in the modern sense) does no longer appear as so much of an epochal event in world history, and the "processes" that would account for its emergence must share with it this change of perspective.

any possible connection of these political structures with migrations, the following results would appear: in America, the tribes of the Iroquois are known to have resided in their approximate locations at the formation of the League long before that event occurred; also, a series of migrations in that continent, some of vast extent (as noted before) did not result in the germination of political structures on a larger scale. In Africa, while the southeastern area of migration, mentioned above, coincides with the presence of state systems such as that of the Zulu Kaffirs, no conspicuous migrations have been recorded in the other much larger sections of the aboriginal continent, where similar states are equally common. In Polynesia, finally, there is correspondence between integrated political structures and an area of vast migrations, but next door to that area, in the Papuan-Melanesian district, not inconsiderable migrations have not led to a similar political result.

In the light of the above considerations, one will, I trust, hesitate in ascribing determining value to migrations, as such, in relation to political organization, as such, even should Professor Teggart succeed in showing that there exists a fairly constant nexus between a certain type of migrations and the emergence of modern or more strictly historical states.

Before proceeding, there is another point made by the author with reference to the relation of kindred to political organization, which must be met here. The statement runs as follows:

To comprehend the situation fully, we may begin by saying that kindred organization, in whatever form it may assume, reflects the natural facts of human generation. What follows immediately from this is a commonplace of the study of primitive man which must be constantly borne in mind, for kindred organization implies the unquestioned and unremitting dominance of the group over the individual, and this leads to the tenacious and uncompromising maintenance of customary ways and ideas. It will thus be seen that the despotism of custom negatives the idea that kindred organization could have been given up voluntarily, or exchanged, after deliberation, for something invented or considered better. The change, as I have pointed out, has been forced upon men at certain geographical points, determined by the physical distribution of land and water, and by a series of exigencies which go back to specific changes in climate within a definite area of the earth's surface. Furthermore, the immediate occasion of the break-up of kindred groups has been the collision and conflict, at the termini of routes, which have ensued from the migrations of men. . . . (pp. 84-5).

This conception is perhaps the most surprising and least acceptable in the entire volume. There is something quaintly humorous in the idea of these magical geographical termini at which, again and again, time-worn traditions and customs, including kindred organization itself, are shed like old scales, to make room for individualism, political organization and the modern world. One fears that the "migration-political organization" constant might turn top-heavy, if to its other burdens is added this one of the breakdown of kinship; for history, after all, is not wont to indulge in anything quite so alluringly romantic, and, if she does, she does not repeat herself.

The three primitive areas mentioned before where political organization has reached its culmination points, may incidentally serve as illustrations of possible types of historic relation between social and political units. Among the Iroquois, the political system has emerged through a double integration, of tribal units, on the one hand, and of clans, on the other. In this process, while the tribal units have lost a great deal of their former independence, the clan units do not seem to have been similarly affected, remaining in full possession of multifarious functions, notwithstanding the extension of some of the latter to homologous clans throughout the League. In Africa, the socio-political systems present the curious picture of mostly gentile organizations of obviously great antiquity overlaid by political structures of more recent origin. The gentes, moreover, have undergone mutations in various ways; thus, the numbers of individuals constituting a gens, originally no doubt limited to proportions compatible with a society based on genuine kinship grouping, have grown so large, extending often into many thousands, that the kinship character of the gentes has of necessity become very much attenuated; again, many gentes have assumed functions associated with the requirements of the political system, functions which originally must have been foreign to these units. The kinship organizations of Africa are evidently on the way of passing into something which is no longer a kinship organization. In Polynesia, finally, the clan basis of society, of which the traces are obvious enough, has almost wholly ceased to exist, ceding its

place to local units which here constitute the minor divisions of the political aggregate. Turning, finally, to the political organizations with which Professor Teggart is primarily concerned, the demonstration has never been made, if it ever will be, that all the peoples of ancient Eurasia were once divided into clans or gentes. Some of them, no doubt, were; but it is highly improbable that many of these should have preserved their kinship systems up to the late time of the inception of the great historic states. Most of these systems must have passed out long before, nor is the only possible alternative to be found in the assumption that they "could have been given up voluntarily or exchanged, after deliberation" (an assumption we might leave for J. G. Frazer to defend against the author).

The remaining part of the chapter on "The Human Factor" contains some of the most suggestive ideas of the book. One feels that in a future elaboration of his study, the author will be able to make an impressive case for his position with reference to the cultural significance of the detached individual and the nature and behavior of idea-systems. Some brief comments, at this time, will, however, not be amiss. Returning once more to those conflicts at the terminal points of migrations with which we are already familiar, the author proceeds:

The cardinal point is that the conflict, in breaking up the older organization, liberated the individual man, if but for a moment, from the dominance of the group, its observances, its formulae, and its ideas. Briefly, a situation was created in which the old rites and ceremonies could not be performed, one in which the old rules of action were manifestly inadequate, and hence one in which the individual became, in some measure, a law unto himself. This, at bottom, is the fact upon which all history turns (p. 84).

And again:

Most significant of all, the central feature of transition is not merely the substitution of territory for blood relationship as the basis of unity in human groups, but the emergence of individuality and of personal self-assertion, and hence it follows that human advance rests ultimately upon the foundation of individual initiative and activity (p. 98).

As contrasted with this, the conditions in primitive society are sketched in the following words:

So completely was the individual subordinated to the community that art was just the repetition of tribal designs, literature the repetition of tribal songs, and religion the repetition of tribal rites (pp. 86-7).

And, once more:

the traditional ideas entertained have, in general, been transmuted into customary actions and ways of doing things. So, religious ideas are concentrated in rites and observances, and explanations of natural phenomena are embodied in symbolic ceremonies. In short, the whole body of custom and tradition represents ideas fixed in action. Since these modes of action, which are associated with the essential activities of life, must be prosecuted with rigid adherence to precedent, it is evident that any reconsideration of the validity of the ideas upon which they rest is practically out of the question. Primitive man does not "think," he performs definitely prescribed actions under the eye of the community, which, in turn, is vitally concerned in the exactness with which the repetition of formula or ceremony is carried out (p. 108).

It would be futile to dispute the profound significance for progress of the free creative individual, as attested to in the above passages. Also, the contrast, from this standpoint, between modern and primitive conditions, is, in the main, indubitably correct. But when we are asked to look upon the terminal points of migrations with their cultural conflicts, as the birthplaces of individualism, agreement must be withheld. However tradition-ridden primitive society may be, it is far from presenting the characteristics of a well-nigh automatic perpetuator of traditional usage with which the author attempts to endow it. A superficial survey of primitive art, religion, and mythology would suffice to show that oversocialized though primitive man may be, he does not merely draw to pattern, repeat by rote ancestral stories and mutter timeworn incantations. While the range of individual creativeness is certainly limited, when compared with modern standards, while the self-consciousness of the primitive artist may impress us as insignificant, there is creativeness, in art, religion, myth-telling and myth-making, in which man and woman participate. That primitive man does not think is as little true as the obsolete dogmas that he has no power of abstraction or that his language has no grammar. It must also be remembered that Professor Teggart, like so many before him, portrays primitive man as if he were free from those matter-of-fact activities, which, in fact, constitute to

him, as they do to us, the very core of the struggle of life. Apart from song and dance, from prayer, incantation and sacred rite, from myth-telling and listening, from painting, carving and embroidering, there goes on from day to day the serious and hard business of hunting and fishing, the building of traps and snares, of houses and canoes, the making of pots and the weaving of baskets, spinning and sewing, the making of weapons and the using of them; all this serious and hard business, the descriptions of which fill large sections of our ethnological monographs, is carried on from day to day, by man and by woman, in complete oblivion of the supernatural and frequent disregard of the esthetic, with the senses pitched high, and the mind alert, observing, trying, improving, inventing, achieving expertness and success. While all this is done within the more or less narrow bounds of accepted use and wont, traditionally derived and socially imposed, it is the individual who does the work, who adjusts himself, who creates. Thus, whatever factors may be held responsible for the precipitation at certain times and places of individual detachment, self-assertion and originality, it is, after all, but a precipitation of certain qualities of the individual which have asserted themselves all along and have left their mark on the many types of civilization encompassed in the primitive world.

Note must be taken here of another conception which, together with the emergence of individuality, is emphasized in this section of the work; a conception which is not new, but appears, in the author's hands, in a somewhat novel illumination. The conception is that of an idea-system as characterizing a particular form of civilization, at a given place and time. The following passages may serve to elucidate the author's point:

If then, we come to compare, not man and brute, but the differing groups that go to make up the human population of the globe, the distinguishing feature of any group will be, not its language, implements, or institutions, but its particular idea-system, of which these other manifestations of activity are varying expressions. Without exception the products of human activity are expressions or aspects of the entire mental content of the group or individual. This mental content, moreover, is not to be conceived of as a mere assemblage of disparate units placed in juxtaposition, but as cohering in an idea-system. Ideas are not simply accumulated or heaped up; on the contrary, every "new" idea added

not only modifies, but is in turn modified by the existing system into which it is incorporated (pp. 102-3).

And again:

It will appear, then, that if we are to consider the content of life in addition to the exterior forms of human association, the study before us must concern itself with the factors and processes through which the idea-systems of different groups have come to be as we find them today (p. 103).

Now, all this is very suggestive, but also very unclear. A good many interpretations could be given of the author's formulation; thus, it will be best to defer more deliberate discussion until concrete performance has clarified the author's intention. One or two points, however, should not be passed over in silence. We are told that "language, implements and institutions" are expressions of an idea-system. Two questions are in order here: in what sense are they expressions? and are they expressions of an idea-system? It is well understood that language is an expression of thought, but also determines thought; that implements are outgrowths of tasks to be achieved, but also determine or modify such tasks; that institutions spring from certain tendencies, attitudes and needs, but, once more, are moulders as well as moulded. In other words, the psychological or psycho-sociological requirements, which may be posited as the primary factor, presently receive concrete embodiment in act, tool, or code, which henceforth are operative in producing shifts in the original psychological factors and in creating new ones with which the process starts anew. Thus the objective and behavioristic elements of a civilization can never be regarded as direct expressions of the ideas or idea-systems that have, or may have, originally engendered them, but are, in fact, indefinitely and often irredeemably removed from them. Neither the objective nor the psychological factors can in this context be regarded as either wholly passive or wholly active. There is rather a continuous give and take. Only in one sense, moreover, may one speak of one idea-system as underlying a state of civilization—and this brings us to our second question—in the sense, namely, that every civilization displays to a greater or less extent the oft-recognized tendency of integrating and assimilating, psychologically, the

heterogeneous and variously derived elements of which it is composed. Therefore, I suspect, it is more or less coördinated clusters of ideas or idea-systems rather than singular idea-systems that the author will encounter in his comparative study of different forms and states of civilization. On the other hand, the author is to be congratulated upon his endorsement of the view, latterly decidedly on the ascendent, that "human advancement is the outcome of the commingling of ideas through the contact of different groups" (p. 111). It is to be expected that the evidently partial truth of this statement will be done justice to in the author's fuller treatment of the subject; also, considering that the theoretical postulate of progress through "the commingling of ideas" has, in the domain of ethnology, led to such widely different systems as those of Graebner, Rivers, and Boas, it is not a little curious in what particular way the author will handle the difficult set of problems involved.¹

One has a sharp sense of disappointment to find that, in the last analysis, the subject of idea-systems is brought down to the wholly inadequate level of the environmentalist. We read: "Differences in idea-systems are, fundamentally, man's response to differences in his surroundings" (p. 113, and similar statements on pp. 117 and 118). Must we hear once more that the "surroundings" of a group "determine" its primary interests and that these, the primary economic interests, determine the system of ideas? What the "surroundings" do effect is, at most, to hold man to an adjustment once made (the adjustment itself always remaining one of a set of possible ones), also offering considerable resistance to further readjustments.² As to idea-systems, when we hear that while the language of the Eskimo has many different words for "seal," that of the Arab displays a similar elaboration of terms for the "camel" (p. 114), the cultural significance of this is by no means apparent. In fact, both might conceivably have similar or identical

¹ Cf. also my "History, Psychology and Culture," etc., *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, vol. xv (1918), in which a number of points bearing on the theoretical issues mentioned above are discussed under the general caption of "accidental" factors.

² See Clark Wissler, "Aboriginal Maize Culture as a Typical Culture Complex," *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. xxi, 1916.

idea-systems, the camel with its terminology fitting into the same pigeonhole, in one case, as the seal with its terminological derivatives does in the other. Nor is it at all clear why fishing, cattle-raising and farming should determine different idea-systems, except in a sense much more restricted than that implied in the author's formulation. Instances substantiating this statement are as familiar to the author as they are to the present writer.

The author's argument in the last chapter on "Methods and Results" is, perhaps, less striking and daring, but his reasoning is in closer touch with concrete fact and his analysis is often impressive. Turning to a general characterization of the nature and mechanisms of civilization, the author asks, with Bagehot: "If fixity is an invariable ingredient in early civilization, how then did any civilization become unfixed?" (pp. 130-1). The task then is, first, to disclose the processes which work for stagnation, then those that bring about change. For purposes of such an analysis the author takes man for granted, leaving the problem of his physical history to the biologist, and also postulates a general psychological comparability of mankind. That the latter postulate is but a working hypothesis, of this the author is well aware; it is for him a "methodological assumption set up for purposes of a particular investigation" (p. 136). The pages devoted to an analysis of the working of social inertia, conservatism, tradition, will stand careful perusal (pp. 138-140). They close with this pertinent and timely remark: "While, then, educative discipline tends to preserve what has been acquired, it presents a very real obstacle to further advance" (p. 140). Fixity, however, is not all, for were culture nothing but a method of preserving the past, progress would be impossible. "Under actual conditions," writes Dr. Teggart, "this fixity of ideas is never complete, and in all human groups there may be observed in operation certain processes through which idea-systems are being slowly but continuously modified" (p. 141). In dealing with these changes the author displays what seems exaggerated caution and fearfulness,—one perceives how deeply stirred his spirit must be by the unique significance of the history-moulding episodes at the termini of migrations. Scant justice is done, there-

fore; to the civilizational contribution of the "great man" and even to that of the "contact of peoples," although the author ascribes not a little significance to this latter factor. We read:

For more than one reason, indeed, no "genius" can make any great departure from the idea-system of his people; the individual may influence the group, but such modifications as he may succeed in introducing will proceed along established lines, and cannot be regarded as significant "changes" (p. 143).

This careless and unjust statement scarcely requires serious refutation. Again, with reference to the changes induced by the spread of cultural features, through the "contact of peoples," but unaccompanied by invasion *en masse* and conflict *in loco*, the author writes:

The reason [for the inability of these factors to further "advance"] is not far to seek, for while the contact process may tend theoretically, to bring all groups to the level of the highest, it cannot serve to place any one group far in advance of the rest (p. 146).

While a book might, perhaps, be needed to disprove this assertion, it is worth pointing out that the principle of creative synthesis, so brilliantly formulated by Wundt, stands in direct opposition to the author's allegation. The setting free of reserve energies, the release of powers clogged up by traditional rut, under the provocation of apparently inconspicuous events introduced through foreign contact or inner changes, these well known and often described psychosociological phenomena guarantee the almost unlimited possibilities of the production of much from little in matters cultural. James's admirable remarks, quoted by the author with undisguised appreciation, bear directly on the issue at hand.

In conclusion I want to quote two statements which give a succinct summary of the author's position. Writes Dr. Teggart:

What we find actually throughout the course of history are the unmistakable results of constant processes manifested in fixity or persistence, tempered by other processes which gradually effect a modification of this rigidity. In addition to these two sets of processes, however, there is abundant evidence of the fact that at different times and in different places certain events have led to significant changes in the groups affected, and that these changes stand in direct relation to the phenomenon of "advance" (p. 148).

And again:

The hypothesis required may now be stated in the form that human advancement follows upon the mental release, of the members of a group or of a single individual, from the authority of an established system of ideas. This release has, in the past, been occasioned through the breaking down of previous idea-systems by prolonged struggles between opposing groups which have been brought into conflict as a result of the involuntary movements of peoples. What follows is the building up of a new idea-system, which is not a simple cumulation of the knowledge previously accepted, but the product of critical activity stirred by the perception of conflicting elements in the opposed idea-systems (pp. 151-2).

As one looks back, synthetically, at the author's effort, its timeliness and significance are strikingly revealed. The pressing into service of the different social sciences in the common enterprise of making clear the history of man, is a task of which the execution has recently been advocated from quite different quarters;¹ the theoretical importance, for certain purposes, of breaking through the accepted lines of demarcation between the conventionally recognized social sciences, has also been indicated.² The author is to be commended for his advocacy of more precise methodology in the solution of specific problems in historic research, to supplement, we hope, not to supplant, the less rigorous procedure of the more subjective type of interpretative historic narrative. In so far as the author's immediate endeavor will consist in the determination of historic constants, he will certainly enjoy the support and keenest interest of all students of man and his history. It may be doubted, however, whether any constants thus revealed will prove as categorical as those of some natural sciences, not to speak of those of the exact sciences. To all appearance, the author is free from all racial bias and accepts man's culture the world over as furnishing strictly comparable material for historic study. Certain more extreme forms of environmental and economic interpretation are vigorously attacked and rejected. The scope and perspective of historic study is deliberately pushed beyond the boundaries of

¹ Cf. Clark Wissler, "Historical and Psychological Interpretations in Culture," *Science*, vol. XLIII, 1916, and his "The American Indian", Introduction.

² Cf. A. A. Goldenweiser, "History, Psychology and Culture," etc., *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, vol. xv (1918), Reprint, pp. 1-2. From the standpoint of educational policy, the utilization of this principle will be found exemplified in the announcement of courses for 1919-1920 of the New School for Social Research, New York.

Europe, to the inclusion, especially, of the great continental mass of Asia.¹ Again, the author's careful attention to the psychological factors involved in historic reconstruction, deserve especially warm support in these days of behaviorism and statistics. The approach of the mental side of human advance from the standpoint of the growth, conflict and transformation of idea-systems, holds out many alluring vistas, of interest and concern not alone to the historian and sociologist, but to the psychologist (barring the behaviorist faction) and the philosopher. General recognition must also be granted to the author's tripartite classification of the factors involved in the maintenance and growth of civilization, the factor of persistence and fixity, that of gradual cumulative change, and, finally, that of violent transformation leading to definite "advance." As has been seen, however, the scope given to the phenomenon of "advance" cannot be accepted without reservation.

On the other hand, the specific formulation of the author's task cannot be pronounced as entirely satisfactory. That his attempt represents an application of the method of science to the study of man, cannot be accepted, for, in the last analysis, what he wants to do is to lay bare certain constants in the determination of historic successions, an enterprise which theoretically lies in the level of the historic branches of the natural sciences such as astronomy, geology, and biology, but which must also be quite different, in its problems as well as its methods, from the procedures characteristic of the non-historic branches of the natural sciences as well as of the entire field of exact science. Again, the narrowing down of the investigation to the determinants of "political organization," while permissible in itself, seems to have impeded the author's recognition of the vast multiplicity of factors of historic causation. The connotation given to the term "political organization" is too narrow, an issue not merely of terminological character, for a wider view readily reveals the fact that some fundamental features of political organization are inherent in all

¹ It is worth noting that a similar extension of historic outlook on an even vaster scale, was theoretically advocated by Lamprecht, *Die Moderne Geschichtswissenschaft*, and that the task has been actually attacked by Breysig, *Die Geschichte der Menschheit*; the highly speculative and almost phantastic excursions of the latter author could, however, only serve to bring the entire scheme into undeserved disrepute.

society, a discovery which cannot but change the perspective in which the processes which may, perhaps, be shown to be responsible for the emergence of the more modern type of political organization, will appear to the investigator. Further, the authors "constants," in so far as indicated in this preliminary study, are subject to criticism. The constant "climate-migration," while no doubt having a basis of fact, falls far short of representing a necessary or constant causal succession, for while it may be provisionally admitted that climatic changes of sufficient magnitude and destructiveness will probably always result in mass migration, migrations can also be shown to be due to a great variety of other factors. Again the "migration-political organization" constant, whatever the result of the author's attempt to demonstrate it for a particular type of political organization, amounts at best but to one of many factors involved in the process, for migrations not accompanied by the formation of political organization (even of the more centralized variety) are as common as political organizations the roots of which do not rest in migrations. Adverse climatic change—desiccation—migration *en masse*—conflicts at the terminal point of the route of travel—occupation of invaded territory—conflict of idea-systems—dissolution of established custom and belief—liberation of the individual—criticism—creativity—advance, these constitute, Professor Teggart would have us believe, the "processes of history," and in their uniformity lies the "homogeneity" of history. We have seen how much truth there may lie in certain aspects of this complex; perhaps the author's subsequent demonstrations will enhance the probability of certain further parts of his theory, but in its entirety, as representing the "processes of history" and as proof of historic homogeneity, the theory must be rejected. It is, moreover, incumbent upon those who may see the author's contribution in the light of the present writer, to lay bare its failings before the interested students of society, for the theory, not unlike the anthropo-geographical ideas of Ratzel, is by no means devoid of those alluring features of simplicity, definiteness and grandioseness, to which the mind of man, ever eager for finality and repose, continues to fall an easy prey.